

Shoemaker House  
Forty Fort, Pennsylvania  
Lancaster Co.

HABS No. Pa-22

HABS  
PA  
40-FORD  
2

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. Pa-2

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Thomas H. Rafterton, District Officer  
139 South Main Street, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

PAGE  
PA.  
No. 2000

SHOEMAKER HOUSE  
FORTY FORT, PENNSYLVANIA  
1a-22

The old house faces northwest, on ground which drops away abruptly at the rear so that there are three stories in the front and four at the back, the basement kitchen being all above ground. It was built in 1820 although not entirely finished until 1824. The house was built of brick encased in wood.

There is a big open fireplace in every room beside fireplaces and oven in the old basement kitchen.

The locks were all made by hand, right there on the place, as were all the nails which are an unusual shape. The locks with their long lever handles and funny little latches attached to a big iron box shape case, are very interesting. Peter Allabach was the builder, doing everything by hand, such as making the window frames, fluting the columns for the porch, carving old metal pieces as well as making the doors for the first floor, the frames of which are of cherry and the panels of birdseye maple.

The kitchen on the back hillside is large and very light. The old bake oven, protuding like a large beehive, was used for all bakings and roastings. There was a huge grate with a big crane over it.

There was no plumbing until 1888, when the Spring Brook Water Company put their pipes down Wyoming Avenue. The water supply originally was from a well, with an old wooden pump, but drinking water came from two springs below the house.

The stairs in the front hall are particularly interesting, those of the present Westmoreland Club being a copy. The main stairway is on the left hand wall of hallway, as you enter door opening on porch, having two quarter turns.

The old garden was rather formal with a big snowball bush in the center, with Myrtle growing around in a circle. The flower beds were triangular and very large, bordered with pinks, cowslips, and English violets. Roses of many varieties, and a perfect tangle of the old Damask rose and Hundred leaf. There was always a bed of heliotrope and lemon verberna. The grape arbors, and fruit trees added much to the charm of the garden paths.

For over one hundred years it has steadily and beautifully carried on the traditions and hospitality which are incorporated in its being.

Abraham's creek ran directly behind the house.

There were five mantels upstairs--three of wood, two of gray marble. Curly maple and cherry in library with two small columns on each side. The woodwork was also done in maple and cherry.

Built-in closets in all but two rooms, with doors of wood and panelled.

Author. . . . .

Francis S. S. S. S.

Approved,

District Officer

Thomas H. Atchison

Rev. Sept. 21, 36 T.T.O.

SHOEMAKER HOUSE  
FORTY FORT, PENNSYLVANIA  
Pa-22

PA.  
40-4000  
2

"Elm Lawn, " the old homestead of the Shoemaker family, is located on the east side of Wyoming Avenue in the upper part of Forty Fort, Penna., in four acres of lawn, old fashioned garden and beautiful trees, and on the banks of "Abraham's Creek."

The construction was started in 1820, and I have been told, was not completed until 1824. The house is of brick and covered with wide clapboards painted white, with green shutters. The names of the architect and builder are unknown, although one of the head carpenters was a Mr. Allabaugh, whose descendants are still in the Valley.

The house was built by Elijah Shoemaker, Jr., who was a little baby in the old fort in Forty Fort during the massacre in 1778, at which time his father, Elijah Shoemaker, was tomahawked by the Indians, in the Wyoming massacre.

The house is quite a perfect type of colonial architecture and is famous for its lovely doorway, dormer windows, well planned proportions and easy stairs. The doors, as well as the bannister, are of curly maple and cherry. The iron door locks, being in the box type with crooked levers as handles, are very unusual. The old basement kitchen with the big Dutch oven and open grate with huge crane, have been spots of great interest, although they are somewhat changed now. The style of architecture inside and out has never been changed.

Elijah Shoemaker had a very large family, but the oldest son was the next occupant of the old home, probably moving there about 1835. This was Charles Denison Shoemaker, a graduate of Yale College, who later became a judge in the Luzerne County Court. The third master of "Elm Lawn," the oldest son of Stella Mercer and Charles Denison Shoemaker, was Robert C. Shoemaker, also a graduate of Yale College and a practicing attorney in Luzerne County, and married Mrs. Helen Lea Lonsdale of New Orleans, Louisiana. Their two daughters, Stella Mercer and Grace Lea Shoemaker, (now Mrs. Charles H. Miner), lived in the old home until the death of their father in 1902. In 1906 the oldest daughter, Stella Mercer, was married to William R. Ricketts, and after her death "Elm Lawn" passed into the hands of her husband, who is the present owner and who has resided there since 1906.

The home was famous for its lovely hospitality and great friendliness extended to everyone. The owners and their gracious wives made everyone welcome and were constantly surrounded by their friends. An ideal home in the beautiful valley of Wyoming.

Author Grace Lee Snowaker Prince

Approved,

District Officer Thomas H. Atchison